

August 2012 A newsletter for RAMUS Scholars, Mentors and Alumnus members

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Keep your contact details up-to-date

You can now update your details online through the RAMUS website: <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au> - go to the Current Scholars, Mentors or Alumnus page as appropriate.

You are also welcome to contact us by email or phone to update your details.

The opinions expressed in the RAMUS Newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily of the National Rural Health Alliance or its individual Member Bodies.

From the RAMUS team

NURHC 2012 was a great conference with inspiring keynote speakers, excellent student presentations and a lively social program. Our thanks to the conference organisers for including our RAMUS lunch in the conference program.



RAMUS scholars and Teena Downton, NRHSN Community and Advocacy Portfolio Rep (3rd from right) at NURHC

There's a new way for RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni to communicate with the RAMUS team and with one another. We have set up a RAMUS Facebook group exclusively for current scholars and mentors and members of the RAMUS Alumnus program. Turn to p.2 for more information.

Will Goss's article about setting up relationships between local medical students and his home town health practices and services might inspire others to build similar connections in their own home town.

We also have a great story about former scholar, Dr Joe Turner's experiences as Lead Doctor for the American 'Survivor' reality TV show.

The 12th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Adelaide in April 2013 with the theme of 'strong commitment bright future'. We encourage scholars, alumni and mentors to consider submitting an abstract for the conference – see p.5 for more details

In September we'll welcome Project Officer, Lesley Crompton, back to the RAMUS Team from maternity leave. Lesley will be working four days per week. Dane will be moving to another role in the National Rural Health Alliance, but he'll continue to work with us one day per week.

The RAMUS team
Susan, Dane and Janine

Join RAMUS on Facebook!

RAMUS has recently launched a Facebook group just for current RAMUS scholars, current RAMUS mentors and members of the RAMUS Alumnus program.

Joining the RAMUS Facebook group is a great way to stay connected with your RAMUS peers and to keep up to date with all the latest RAMUS happenings.

Scholars, mentors and alumni will have recently received an email inviting them to join. If you didn't receive the email but would like to join, please contact RAMUS at ramus@ruralhealth.org.au.

Membership of the RAMUS Facebook group is voluntary. If you don't wish to join, rest assured you won't miss out on receiving information and news about RAMUS as we will continue to communicate with you through our usual channels.

2012 National University Rural Health Conference

by Susan Magnay, Manager RAMUS



More than 160 students, all passionate about rural health, headed to Creswick in Victoria on 9-11 August for the 2012 National University Rural Health Conference. Among the delegates were about 18 RAMUS scholars.

The formal theme for the Conference was 'Connect, Engage, Inspire' and the Conference certainly delivered on this promise.

However, I felt that the strongest message running through NURHC was 'making a difference'. The message of keynote speakers such as Dr Ashraf Takla and Dr Claire Hepper, both Victorian country GPs; Michael O'Halloran who works in public health for the Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation in the NT; Christopher Cliffe, National President of CRANAPlus, Manager of Primary Health Care for the RFDS in North Queensland and who has had an extensive career in war and disaster zones around the world and in rural and remote nursing; and Brad Murphy, Assoc Professor,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health at Bond University, was that the many opportunities to make a difference to people's lives were the greatest rewards of rural practice.

Lou Andreatta from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing reminded us that the voice of students through their rural health clubs and the National Rural Health Students' Network (NRHSN) is valued by policy makers.

The student presentations were a showcase for some great rural health club activities, research projects and rural experiences.

Thanks to the conference organisers, the RAMUS scholars at the Conference were able to get together for lunch. This was very enjoyable and I especially appreciated the chance to meet scholars face-to-face.

The social program for the Conference was outstanding. I'm sure everyone will have made many new friends from universities all over the country.

Congratulations to the RAMUS scholars who were among the award winners announced at the formal dinner. Madeleine Venables (UWA 3rd year) received the award for Outstanding Contribution to a Rural Health Club and the second prize in the Janie Dade Smith Award. Shannon Nott, now in his intern year at Orange Base Hospital NSW, was awarded life membership of the NRHSN in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Network.

2013 RAMUS application round

Applications for RAMUS 2013 will open on 7 November 2012 and will close on 14 January 2013.

The 2013 RAMUS Application Form and Guidelines will be available at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au> from 7 November 2012.

Dr Joseph Turner's 'Survivor' experience

('Dr Joe' is a former RAMUS scholar who graduated from University of Queensland in 2005 and is now undertaking an Advance Diploma in Obstetrics at Coffs Harbour Hospital)

Sometimes opportunity knocks at just the right time. For Dr Joe Turner who was just finishing his training for Fellowship of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), the chance to be Lead

Doctor on the American reality TV show *Survivor* was one too hard to let pass by.

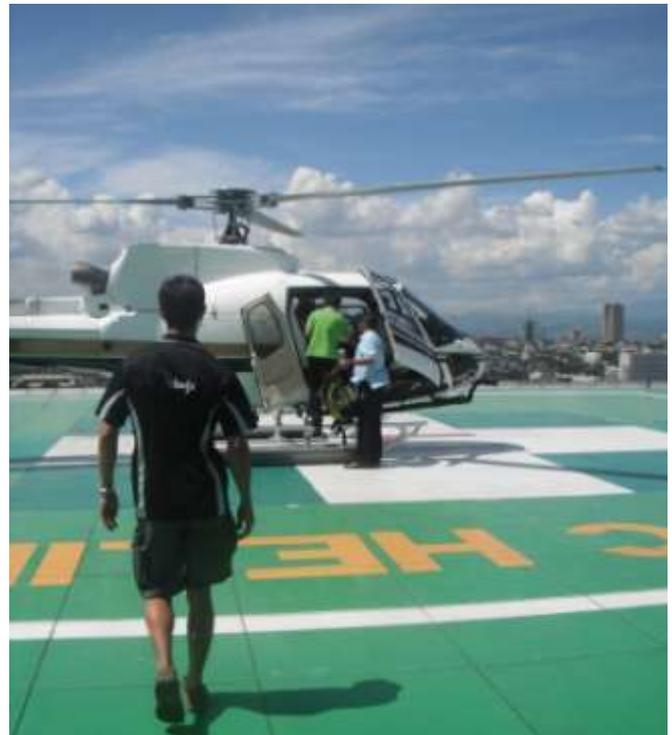
Dr Joe and his wife Janine moved to Charleville, South West Queensland in 2010 to undertake rural and remote medical training and Occupational Therapy work respectively. The drawcard for Dr Joe was working with Dr Chester Wilson, an inspirational rural GP (and former RAMUS mentor) who taught about life as well as medicine. Under his tutelage Joe earned his FACRRM and had made plans to pursue obstetrics further with the Advanced Diploma of the RANZCOG in Coffs Harbour NSW.



Dr Joe Turner and his wife, Janine

Then, without notice in December last year, Dr Joe was contacted by an Emergency and Expedition Medicine company who had been contracting medical services to *Survivor* for a number of years. 'I submitted my CV to them earlier in the year and didn't hear anything back. Next thing I knew they wanted to fly me to Sydney then Los Angeles for various interviews' explained Dr Joe. 'It was a whirlwind week and I could barely believe it when they offered me the job.'

The decision to go along was difficult since it required deferring obstetrics training and dealing with other logistical issues. 'Janine and I wanted to make sure this was the right decision for us as a couple, and that it would be worth the sacrifices we had to make,' said Dr Joe. 'Then again, the chance to go out there and do something so different and exciting...somewhere overseas, exotic and tropical...well it sounded more than just a bit of fun,' he laughed.



Dr Joe says he was not disappointed with the location: a stunning remote island setting in the beautiful Philippines.

Survivor host, Jeff Probst, revealed at the Season 24 premiere earlier this year that there would be three returning players, each of whom was medically evacuated in a previous season. 'These are true second chancers,' he announced. 'They were pulled from the game. They didn't quit. They didn't get voted out. They were yanked.'



As well as being medically responsible for each of the contestants during the game, Dr Joe coordinated care of all the local and international *Survivor* crew. He also managed a team of doctors, nurses, paramedics and administration staff in his role as Head of Department. 'It was quite hectic most of the time with filming, clinical and managerial duties,' he said. 'The things we had to be prepared for were just what you would expect in a remote seaside jungle location where a production of this size is taking place,' he ventured.

Although given a lot of responsibility, Dr Joe remarked how suited to the situation his medical training program had been, particularly the Emergency Medicine component. When asked if there were any interesting emergencies, he replied that all emergencies are interesting, and that an interesting time was had! He also reported how enjoyable the snorkelling, kayaking and trekking were in that part of the world.



The Local Rural Medical Students Project

by Will Goss (Monash University, 3rd year)

Currently there is no formal relationship between rural students studying medicine and their home town health service. I feel that not only should the local community celebrate one of its own members striving for a university education that is going to help people, but also that the community should be doing its utmost to attract these students back to their local area where there is a great need for health professionals.



Now back in Australia to continue where they left off, Dr Joe and Janine say they will not miss being constantly on call. They acknowledge that many rural and remote doctors and other health professionals live lives with a heavy on call burden but, like being out in the bush or on a TV show, it is outweighed by the rest of the lifestyle to be had.



(From left) Will Goss, Lachie Evans, Jake Malouf, Saada Malouf, Harry Goss

As part of my RAMUS scholarship I have created a project to develop a relationship between local medical students and the local health service. I planted the seed of the Local Rural Medical Students Scheme in my hometown of Sale, Victoria. The ultimate aim is to

encourage students to return to the area once they complete their degree. The scheme works by giving the students access to the local medical library, invitations to local educational events and inviting and welcoming them to informal local general practice and specialist placements throughout their time at university.

We also wish to encourage local secondary students to pursue a career in medicine, by linking them with a local medical student who can give first hand advice on the medical course entry, the course itself and life at university.

The local Rural Medical School has happily accepted and promoted the project. We hope that over the next 6-12 months we can involve all local medical students and expand the project to other regions.

At the beginning of the year, another third year medical student and I held a welcoming session at the clinical school library in Sale for five new medical students from our local area. We answered their questions about the course and about moving to the city. They also signed up for the medical library, giving them 24/7 access when they return on weekends or during the holidays.

Three students have completed informal placements at Gippsland Paediatrics, a multidisciplinary specialist Paediatric clinic in Sale. We have formalised our association with Gippsland Paediatrics and are currently doing the same with two large general practice clinics in Sale. We intend expanding access to other general and specialist practices in our region. These arrangements will give students opportunities to complete informal placements at a variety of practices during their university holidays.

Through this project we are hoping to encourage students to feel part of the local health care network. Hopefully, by the time they graduate they will already feel accepted by the local health carers and will have had a taste of various branches of medicine in their region. The students will have the opportunity to gain an appetite for the strong patient-doctor relationship that exists in rural communities and the job satisfaction this relationship brings. We hope similar projects may be set up at other rural towns throughout Australia in the future.

Dr Jo McCubbin of Gippsland Paediatrics said, *'From my point of view it is a pleasure to have students. They ask good questions, and it is great to have a young person's perspective. For the students I think it is really important that they get to see a bit more of rural specialist practice to counter any impression that if you specialise that will tie you to the city tertiary hospitals. Being able*

to use the library etc when you are at home, makes perfect sense, too.'

Calling future health leaders: 12th NRH Conference call for abstracts now open



Are you a health leader of the future? If 'Yes', you will want to make your views known to a thousand like-minded Australians!

The call for abstracts is now open for the 12th National Rural Health Conference. This biennial conference is the largest regular public event for those interested in improving health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

The theme of the 12th Conference, to be held in Adelaide in April 2013, is 'Strong commitment, bright future' and that's where RAMUS students and alumni have so much to offer.

The future of rural health is yours. It will be shaped by you.

Get a spot on the program by submitting an abstract that jumps out at the program panel because of its importance and its freshness: because of the Bright Future it paints.

Why not consider a joint presentation with your mentor?

The National Rural Health Alliance offers assistance for first time presenters, so if you need any help or encouragement please give us a call.

The online Abstract Portal is open now and closes on 1 October 2012.

Abstracts are sought in four content areas: research; service review; policy; and arts and health. The Abstract Guidelines (via www.ruralhealth.org.au) give full details about the types of presentations, potential topics, assessment criteria, format, submission methods and a timeline of key dates for abstracts and full papers.

The 12th National Rural Health Conference will be an eligible conference for the RAMUS Conference Placement Program (CPP). Later this year we will be calling for applications for CPP support to attend the conference.

There will be a social event for RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni during the Conference. And what would the Conference dinner be without the injection of energy from students who manage to take over the dance floor!

Follow the Conference on Twitter @NRHAlliance and use the #ruralhealthconf hashtag.

Rural leadership training for former scholar

Dr Sally Banfield, a RAMUS scholar from 2004 to 2009 and now a Junior Medical Officer at Alice Springs Hospital, has received sponsorship through the RAMUS Alumnus program to attend the TRAIL training course in September 2012.



Dr Sally Banfield

TRAIL (Training Rural Australians in Leadership) is an intensive 8-day residential course for emerging rural leaders and is presented by the highly regarded

Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (www.rural-leaders.com.au).

Commenting on what she hopes to gain, Sally said: *'I feel passionate about participating in the TRAIL program to further expand my capacity and confidence to make a difference in community based leadership. I believe the key to being a successful leader is in understanding and valuing your community together with having a well-reasoned sense of ethical and social responsibility.'*

The program will create a positive space to have focussed interactions with other participants and speakers that will help me develop my own leadership style.'

We hope to publish a report from Sally on her TRAIL experiences in a future newsletter.

Conference reports from scholars and alumni

In recent months, RAMUS scholars and alumni have attended a range of conferences with support from the RAMUS Conference Placement Program. To view their reports and others, go to:

<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/conference-placement>

Former scholars: have you considered becoming a RAMUS mentor?

Many former scholars have expressed interest at becoming a RAMUS mentor at a suitable stage in their career and the number of RAMUS alumni who are now mentoring scholars is growing every year.

The RAMUS team will soon be contacting alumni who are in PGY3 or higher and who have expressed interest in being a mentor to check if you are currently based in a rural location and are available for RAMUS scholars to approach you as a potential mentor in 2013.

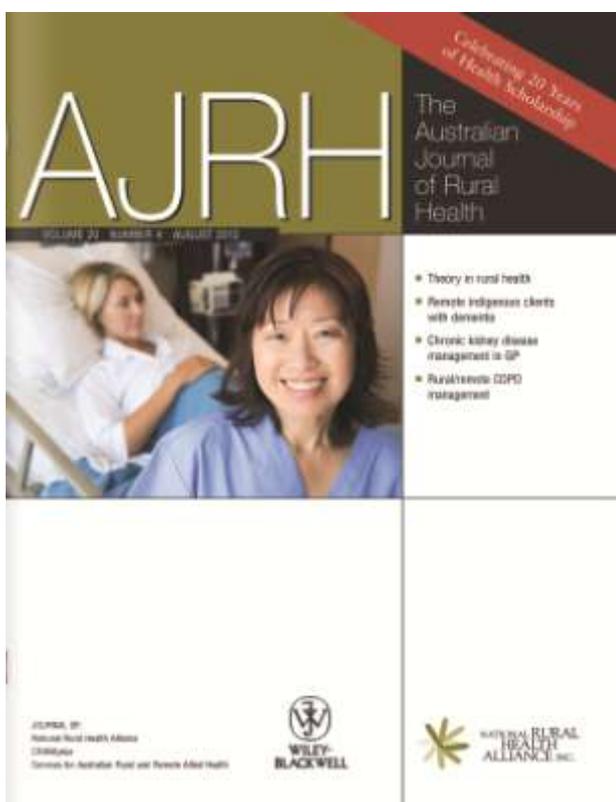
For current scholars who are graduating this year, towards the end of the year you will be invited to join the RAMUS Alumnus program and at that time you will be asked if you are interested in becoming a mentor in the future.

Australian Journal of Rural Health

RAMUS scholars have free access to the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* (AJRH) through the RAMUS website. New scholars have recently received an email with instructions on how to access the *AJRH*.

The *AJRH* offers important research on Australian and international rural health practice. *AJRH* is a multidisciplinary refereed journal. It is peer reviewed and listed in Medline, as well as being covered by other major abstracting and indexing services. It provides research information, policy articles and reflections related to health care in rural and remote areas of Australia, and is an important publication vehicle for researchers and practitioners.

The *AJRH* August 2012 issue NOW online.



The August edition includes articles on the experiences of overseas-trained health professionals in rural and remote areas of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA; dementia awareness in remote Aboriginal communities; GP management of chronic kidney disease; the effectiveness of an eating disorder service delivery; mental health care; and delivery of health services to remote-dwelling Indigenous mothers and infants.

To access the *AJRH* go to <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/ajrh>.

Vale Andrew Forrest

written by Andrew's family



Known as a 'friendly giant' and 'Zen Andy' by his friends, Andrew Forrest was proud to be a new RAMUS scholar in 2012. He was in his second year of medicine at Monash University. Andrew finished high school in Darwin, NT, and then took a gap year to spend time with friends and family and save money before moving to Melbourne. His goal was to complete Medicine and return to Darwin to practise as a rural doctor alongside his mother, father and sister. In his spare time, Andrew greatly enjoyed the social and sporting opportunities at Monash. He was passionate about health and fitness and a dedicated member of the Monash University Kickboxing Club. A skilled athlete with a 'mean right cross', he was always keen to share tips and encourage others to join the gym or start kickboxing with him. He was a great sport and added wit and wry humour to any situation.

Andrew passed away suddenly from a cardiac arrhythmia on May 14, 2012 at the age of 20. His funeral at Monash Religious Centre was attended by more than 200 students, friends and family. This was followed by a memorial service in Darwin the next week. Andrew is greatly missed by his friends and family, who remember him as a fantastic guy, with a big smile and a huge heart. His passing has left an enormous gulf in many lives. Our memories of him will be forever cherished.

RAMUS in the news

'How to manage camels and to suture without fainting' is the title of an article about RAMUS published in the Public Health Association of Australia's (PHAA) *Intouch* magazine. The article features stories from a number of RAMUS scholars highlighting the variety, unpredictability and scope of rural practice and drawing on their experiences with their RAMUS mentors. Go to <G:\MEDIA 2012\InTouchPHAAJune12.pdf> to read the full article.

Congratulations to Sara Fraser, RAMUS scholar from JCU, who received an award for the best student presentation at the recent Mt Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health 'Are you Remotely Interested' Conference. Sara's presentation, her first presentation at a conference, was a case study on Mittelschmerz and had a strong rural focus.



Sara Fraser (left) and Professor Sabina Knight, Director of Mt Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health, at the 'Are You Remotely Interested' Conference.

Indemnity and insurance

Scholars – when planning placements with your RAMUS mentor or other supervised clinical activities, please take a few moments to read the statement on indemnity and insurance for RAMUS scholars (available at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/scholars>).



The RAMUS team

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